
Open Letter to the Members of the Communist Party of America from Charles Dirba, Executive Secretary, October 20, 1920

Published in *United Communist Party to the Third International on Unity*. [New York]:
[United Communist Party], circa Nov. 20, 1920; pg. 4.

October 20, 1920.

TO THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE CP

Dear Comrades:—

The Executive Committee of the Communist International has ordered an immediate unity between the CP and UCP.

In the September 14th [1920] issue of the *Izvestiia* from Moscow, which was received by us only on October 14th, the following resolution of the Communist International Executive Committee was quoted as passed in their sessions beginning August 7th, 1920:

Both Communist Parties, the United Communist Party and the Communist Party, are obligated to unite into one party on the basis of the decisions of the Second World Congress of the Communist International [Petrograd and Moscow, July 19-Aug. 7, 1920]. This unity must be finally accomplished not later than in two months. That is by the 10th of October 1920. Those who do not subject themselves to this decision shall be expelled from the Third Communist International.

Your CEC was called together immediately, and it has passed the following resolution on the matter:

Since the resolution of the Executive Committee of the Communist International demanding immediate unity between the CP and the UCP was received after the date set in the resolution for the final completion of the unity; and recognizing that the idea and the intent

of the resolutions must be carried out to the best of our ability and circumstances without further delay;

We decided to take immediate steps for calling a joint convention with the UCP within two months, the representation to be in proportion to membership, determined upon a just and equal basis for both parties; and to notify the EC of the Communist International of our acknowledgment of their authority in the question, and of the steps we have taken to comply with their decision as soon as it reached us.

Comrades: As a section of the Communist International and in full agreement with the decisions of its 2nd Congress that “all decisions of its Executive Committee are binding upon all the parties belonging to the International, which is working under conditions of the most acute civil war, and must be constructed along much more centralized lines than was the case with the Second International” — we must comply with their order for an immediate unity with the UCP without reluctance or hesitation.

We understand very well that in each country there can be but one Communist Party recognized by the Communist International, and we can see the necessity for their order, since they have not seen their way clear to recognize the Communist Party and not to recognize the UCP, their demands must be carried out, and we have taken the necessary steps for the joint convention with the UCP. But this does not mean that we must or that we should abandon our fight against the non-communist elements in the UCP (especially among their leaders), nor, for that matter, against any such elements still left in our own party. The call for a joint convention will be on the basis of the decisions of the Communist International and its “Conditions for Affiliation,” the second section of which reads as follows:

Every organization that wishes to affiliate with the Communist International must regularly and systematically remove the reformist and centrist elements from all the more or less important posts in the labor movement (in party organizations, editorial offices, trade unions, etc.) and replace them with well tried communists, without taking offense at the fact that, especially in the beginning, the places of “experienced opportunists” will be filled by plain workers from the masses.

Unity with the UCP does not mean peace nor even a truce with such centrists as Caxton [Isaac E. Ferguson] and Damon [C.E. Ruthenberg], with such violators of party discipline and obligations as Damon [Ruthenberg] and Fisher [Leonid Belsky], with “Americans”

who can not tolerate language federations, with defenders of Debs, with “legalists,” and all the other variety of “also-communists” who have found the existence of two parties a convenient shield and excuse for their violation of party principles and discipline.

It means only that instead of fighting them in another party and forcing them into the other, as at present, we shall have to fight them within the party and expel them from the party if necessary. We shall have to modify our methods of fighting them, but in return they will have much more difficulty to hoodwink the membership and to draw it with them out of the party.

In these circumstances all true communists must prepare to do their share in starting the united party on the right tracks and to keep it there in spite of the non-communist elements in it. All Communist Party groups must immediately take up for study and discussion the decisions of the Second Congress of the Communist International and the “Conditions for Affiliation” with it; and when the time comes they should see to it that only true comrades, only steadfast and uncompromising communists, are chosen for electors and convention delegates.

Yours for Communism,

[Charles Dirba],
Executive Secretary.

COMMUNIST PARTY.

Edited by Tim Davenport

1000 Flowers Publishing, Corvallis, OR · May 2012 · Non-commercial reproduction permitted.